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ABSTRACT

Kindergarten children were administered a self-report self-concept test in order to investigate the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Their teachers' ability to predict what the children reported about their own self-concepts was also explored. Subjects were participants in the Cooperative Demonstration Kindergarten administered by a local school district and a university college of education. Classroom teachers administered the Stanford Early School Achievement Test II (SESAT II). Two weeks later, the researchers administered the Martinek-Zaichkowsky Self-Concept Scale for Children. Results of a correlation analysis indicated that self-concept scores were significant predictors of academic success. Teachers were able to accurately predict 40.5 percent of the self concept scores. They underestimated 52.1 percent and overestimated 7.4 percent. There was not a significant difference between predicted and actual self-concept scores; however, the teachers' underestimation was interesting as indicative of the conservative way in which they rated the children. (GDC)

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SELF-CONCEPT MEASURES OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

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SELF-CONCEPT MEASURES OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Are humans able to view their own selves accurately? Is the phenomena of self ever accurately assessed at any stage of life - and if it is, when does one develop the insight to accurately "know thyself"?

Apparently, until recent history, the picture that human beings of all ages had of themselves, especially school children, wasn't of major concern to anyone except the individuals themselves.

Using the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors and the Library of Congress Subject Headings to compile a list of key words such as; self-concept, self-appraisal, self-actualization, self-esteem, self-perception, etc., for reviewing the literature produced no reported research studies prior to the 1940's in either the Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature, 1890-1939, or the Education Index, 1932-1938. The term self-concept was never used in these sources and references that seemed potentially useful turned out to be of the moralizing variety or concerned with mental health.

In the 1940's, one article, "Self Appraisal of Children" (Tschechlelin, 1945), concerned itself with the personalities of elementary school children and their teachers' perceptions of the children's personalities. The children rated themselves, then their teachers were asked to rank the students using the same characteristics. One of Tschechlelin's major concerns rested with the validity of any instrument in which the students conceivably could choose those characteristics they wished to possess rather than accurately mark those they did possess.

During this period through the late 1950's some interest in self-concept is indicated by the increase in the number of articles referenced in the Education Index, Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature, and

the International Index of Periodicals. Four studies appeared that concerned high school students, four on college students, three on men and women, and one on third grade students. When David Russell (1953) reviewed research on self-evaluation he found, at that time, little to confirm its effectiveness and that very limited findings were available on students below fourth grade.

Reasons for the difficulty in assessing one's self concept are somewhat difficult to pinpoint. The types of problems that generally appear involve logistics, such as (1) administration (i.e.; kindergarten assessment takes longer, simplified answering procedures not suitable, use of instruments developed for older school age children, etc.) (2) "skills" (i.e., the kindergarten children lack certain attributes for test taking - top of page, turn page, make an X, great differences in motor skills, etc.) (3) Judgements (i.e., ability to see how one is perceived by self and others. (Yamamoto, 1972; Correro and Turner, 1983)

In spite of these problems there is no doubt that a new era of self-concept interest began during the 1960's and continues today. ERIC (1966-69) in its premier publication, November/December, 1966 contained zero entries on self-concept. One entry appeared in January of 1967, four appeared by December of 1968, and in one more year two entire columns (55 entries) were devoted to self-concept. Few of these studies dealt with the young child of kindergarten or first grade.

In 1963 Combs and Soper reported in a segment of a broader study that kindergarten and first grade children's "personal adequacy" appeared to be the most important factor of a child's perception of self. They suggested that teachers and administrators need to understand and foster this need. Teachers should be aware of how the child reacts to educational experiences which the child sees as fostering his own "personal

adequacy." A 1978 (Entwisle and Hayduk) investigation into the role of feedback on expectations from parents and teachers found that parental expectations, in general, affected only conduct but held no particular influence over academics. Entwisle and Hayduk did find that first grade teachers' early year evaluations may influence the level of achievement of the young child. Cox (1968) though, found no differences in abilities of nursery school children attributable to parents or teacher attitude variables when measured using the Maryland Parent Attitude Survey and the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory.

In addition to this, teachers (Purkey, 1984) are beginning to see that they do indeed have the ability to transmit "signals" to children that invite the children to feel that they can achieve in school and even that some of the achieving is directly related to the teacher's perception of the child and to some degree, the teacher's perception of her own self.

Strain (et al. 1983) used observer ratings of kindergarten children in order to place them in two extreme groups [high (competent) or low (not competent)]. These ratings and the resulting data from administering the Primary Self-Concept Inventory to the children produced some confused findings. It appeared that the high and low rated children were very similar to each other in their positive perceptions. When scores were related to prereading, compliance, off-task actions, etc., the findings indicated a significant positive correlation of prereading achievement and the highs' positive self-concept. The lows' positive self-concept was significantly correlated with behaviors that were considered "off-task," and with negative actions toward classmates.

In 1978 Nicholls reported that young children seem to have the ability to not have negative feelings about failure of school related

tasks. He suggests that this may be a type of eternal pessimism of the young in which they see success in the future even though they might have problems with present tasks.

We know that teachers of the young child are able to evaluate children's self-concepts consistently and that they are able to use this information for planning curriculum. (Virgin and Shecter, 1974; Morine-Dershimer, 1978-79; Correro and Turner, 1983). Therefore, It seemed reasonable for the researchers to consider the idea that since teachers have been relatively successful in rating children's self-concept and academic achievement, there might also be some relationship between what the learner thinks of his self-concept and the teacher's viewpoint.

Method

This study was designed to focus on the following questions: (1) Does a significant relationship exist for CDK children between their academic achievement and their self concept scores as measured by standardized instruments? and (2) How well can the children's teachers predict what the kindergarten children report about their self-concepts as determined by a standardized instrument? These questions were studied using a correlational approach. Pearson correlation was used to determine relationships between achievement and self-concept. Chi-Square was used to examine the accuracy of the teacher's prediction to the children's reported self-concept scores.

The subjects for this study were the children who attended the Cooperative Demonstration Kindergarten (CDK) during the 1984-85 school year. The children were chosen for the program by a process of stratified randomization since the program is limited to 125 applicants. The CDK is a program administered jointly by the Starkville Municipal Separate School District and the Mississippi State University College of

Education.

Instruments used in the study were the Stanford Early School Achievement Test II (1982 edition) and the Martinek - Zaichkowsky Self-Concept Scale for Children.

The SESAT II was administered to the children in April, 1985. The Self-Concept Scale was also administered in April two weeks after the SESAT II. The SESAT II was administered by the classroom teachers, while the Self-Concept Scale was administered by the researchers. The researchers then asked each of the teachers to use a scale of 1-5 being an estimate of high self-concept, to report their perceptions of the child's self-concept.

Question 1

Does a significant relationship exist for CDK children between their academic achievement and their self-concept scores as measured by a standardized instrument?

Correlation of Achievement and Self-Concept Scores

Table I

Predictor	Self-Concept
SESAT II	.317 *
df = 90	

*Significant at the .01 (.267)

Self-Concept Scores were significant predictors of academic success.

Question 2

How well can the children's teachers predict what the kindergarten children tell us about their self-concepts as measured by a standardized instrument?

Table II

Comparison of Self-Concept Expected by

Teachers with Actual Self-Concepts Scores

Teacher Prediction Category		3	4	5	Chi Square
		%	%	%	
2	____	1.1	0	1.1	
3	19.1%	5.3	2.1	3.2	
4	43.6%	3.2	4.3	2.1	
5	37.2%	9.6	37.2	30.9	12.04

Teachers were: asked to rate their perception of the children's self-concept on a scale of one (1) to five (5), with five being higher.

Equations for category rankings and actual scores made on the Self-Concept Scale were:

Category		Actual Scores
5	=	25 - 21
4	=	20 - 16
3	=	15 - 9
2	=	10 - 6
1	=	5 - 1

Teachers predicted that no child would score in category 1 or 2; that 19.1% of the children would score in category 3; that 43.6% of the

children would score in category 4; and that 37.2% of the children would score in category 5.

While 5.3% of the predicted category 3 was accurate, 1.1% scored in category 2, 2.1% scored in category 4 and 3.2% scored in category 5. Teachers predicted that 43.6% of the children would score in category 4. In addition to the 4.3% accurate prediction, 3.2% scored in category 3 and 2.1% scored in category 5. Of the 37.2% that teachers predicted would score in category 5, 30.9% was predicted accurately, 37.2% scored in category 4 and 9.6% scored in category 3.

Teachers predicted 40.5% of the actual scores accurately. They underestimated 52.1% of the scores and overestimated 7.4%. The Chi-Square which was 12.04 was not significant at .05. There was not a significant difference between predicted and actual Self-Concept Scores of the kindergarten children. However, it is interesting to note the conservative way in which the teachers rated the children. 77.7% of the children had scores on the Self-Concept Scale of 25-21, and the teachers had predicted that only 30.9% would have scores in that category.

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